

Issue 6: Business Locations

Eastern Gateway

- 5.18** The Eastern Gateway is a more dispersed collection of sites than the other Strategic Business Locations, including land allocated for business use at Gilston, Polmont and the business components of mixed use sites at Drum South, Bo'ness, and the Whitecross new settlement.
- 5.19** Gilston offers the best location, adjacent to Junction 4 of the M9, and there has been substantial recent investment in enabling road works on the A803. The site is large and offers flexibility to accommodate a range of requirements.
- 5.20** Whitecross is constrained by a number of factors and requires a new masterplan; business use is still an aspiration but may only be deliverable in the longer term.
- 5.21** The site at the Drum is less well located. It can only accommodate Class 4 uses, for which there is limited demand. In this context, a refocusing of the Drum site on residential use with a smaller business component providing neighbourhood services is proposed.
- 5.22 Preferred Option**
Focus the Eastern Gateway Strategic Business Location on Gilston and Whitecross. Drum South would no longer be a strategic business site, with its business component reduced and focused on provision of a local neighbourhood services.

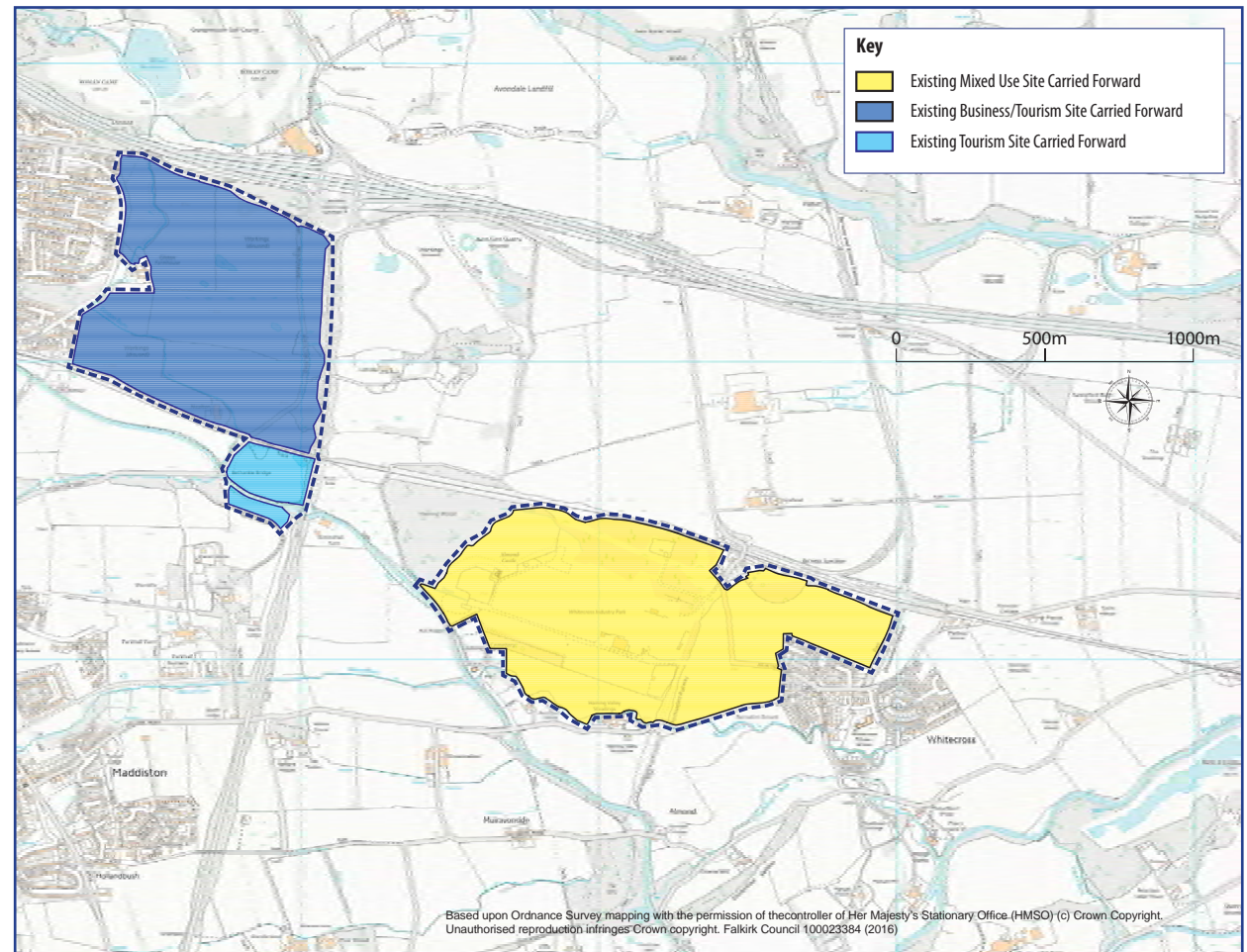
Alternative

A mixed use approach could be adopted for the Gilston site, introducing residential use and reducing the scale of business land.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option differs from LDP1 in that Drum South would no longer be a strategic site within the Eastern Gateway. The alternative would differ from LDP1 by allocating Gilston as a mixed use site, including residential, rather than exclusively business.

Figure 5.4 Eastern Gateway



Issue 6: Business Locations

Other Business Sites and Areas

- 5.23** Outwith the Strategic Business Locations, LDP1 identifies a range of local business sites. No change to these is proposed. An expression of interest was received for a substantial area of business land at Easter Thomaston, Banknock, north of Junction 7 of the M80. This is not considered a reasonable option given its location, likely trunk road issues and the adequacy of the existing business land supply.
- 5.24** Likewise, the definition of core business areas and business areas with potential for redevelopment would remain unchanged, apart from the expansion of the Earls Road core business area in Grangemouth discussed previously. Existing policy on business development in the countryside, which sets out criteria for considering business proposals outwith the urban and village limits, will also be maintained.



Issue 7: Town Centres

Key Question: How can we promote active, accessible and attractive town centres?

5.25 The area's town centres remain under pressure due to economic and social change, particularly affecting the retail sector. There is a wide recognition of the need for centres to adapt to new roles and diversify their function, with less of a reliance on shopping. For respondents to the pre-Main Issues Report consultation, the health of our town and local centres was seen as being the most important planning issue. In response to concerns about the future of town centres, the Scottish Government has introduced the 'town centre first' principle, which seeks to prioritise town centres as the first choice for uses which generate significant footfall.

Falkirk's Network of Centres

5.26 Falkirk's network of centres includes the principal centre of Falkirk, four district centres, a number of local centres, and a proposed edge-of-town commercial centre at the Falkirk Gateway. Policies in LDP1 give priority to these centres, and promote them for a range of uses, in accordance with their defined roles. Although this largely reflects Scottish Planning Policy, the 'town centre first' principle needs to be embedded more thoroughly in LDP2.

5.27 The list of centres, their categorisation and roles, remains robust. However, one key change arises from the review of the Falkirk Gateway site, and the move away from the large-scale retail proposals which previously underpinned the masterplan. In the light of this review, the Falkirk Gateway would no longer be classified as a commercial centre.

5.28 Preferred Option

1. Revise the policy on the network of centres, and relevant supporting policies, to emphasise the 'town centre first' principle.
2. Remove the Falkirk Gateway from the current network of centres.

Alternative

Retain the Falkirk Gateway as a commercial centre in the network of centres.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option adjusts policy to give more emphasis to the town centre first principle and removes the Falkirk Gateway from the network of centres.



Issue 7: Town Centres

Falkirk Town Centre

- 5.29** Falkirk Town Centre has been affected by the decline in high street retailing over the past five years. Between 2013 and 2015, vacancy rates increased from 10.9% to 16.5%, and the number of vacant properties nearly doubled from 2009 to 2014. Nonetheless, the Town Centre retains many of its key attributes, including its traditional character, strong independent sector and growing leisure function. The £5.5m Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is helping to repair and enhance the historic core of the conservation area. Central Retail Park, which is part of the Town Centre, remains vibrant and has been successful in retaining and attracting national retailers, although this has arguably been to the detriment of the historic core of the Town Centre, with which it is not fully integrated.
- 5.30** The aspiration for the Town Centre is that it is active, attractive and accessible. Retailing will continue to be an important function, but investment is needed in other uses that will bring life back to the Town Centre and make it an attractive place to live, work and visit, taking advantage of the area's growing population and increased tourism profile.
- 5.31** Residential, office, leisure, cultural and community uses will have an increasing role to play in bringing existing properties back into use, but also providing the anchor for the main development opportunities at the East End and Grahamston. Residential use should particularly be encouraged, and developer contributions could be reduced within the Town Centre as an incentive to build new homes. For existing properties, flexibility will be needed, even in the core area where the focus has traditionally been on the retail function.

- 5.32** Ongoing investment in the public realm will be needed, building on the current THI work. Connections within the Town Centre need to be improved, particularly for pedestrian and cycle movement from the retail park and the railway station to the core area, as well as links to wider attractions such as the Falkirk Wheel, the Helix and Callendar Park. The Grahamston and East End sites offer particular opportunities to improve key arrival points at the bus and train stations.
- 5.33** The status of Central Retail Park has been raised as an issue, including the option of excluding it from the definition of the Town Centre, in order to give the traditional Town Centre priority under the town centre first principle. However, this would have little practical effect. The emphasis should rather be on strengthening links between the two parts of the Town Centre.
- 5.34** The key opportunities for future development and enhancement in the Town Centre are illustrated in Figure 5.5.

5.35 Preferred Option

1. Promote the key opportunities of Grahamston and the East End, with an emphasis on residential, office, leisure, cultural and tourism uses. The East End site would be expanded to include Callendar Square where there are opportunities for restructuring and new uses.
2. Promote improved connections within and to the Town Centre.
3. Amend policies to increase flexibility on changes of use within the Town Centre, with a core area no longer identified.
4. Support the building of more homes in the Town Centre by relaxing developer contributions on residential development within the Town Centre boundary.

Alternative

Exclude Central Retail Park from the defined boundary of the Town Centre.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option differs from LDP1 by offering more flexibility of use in the Town Centre, relaxing developer contributions on residential development in the Town Centre, and recognising the potential for new uses in Callendar Square as part of the East End development opportunity.

